



The first annual Speak for Thyself Awards Dinner will be held at the Alden House on Aug. 5.

Speak for Thyself Honors Exceptional Women

By MORAG MACLACHLAN

Words spoken by Priscilla Alden hundreds of years ago have become the driving force of a campaign to honor extraordinary women as well as draw attention to the historic Alden House.

Brian Cook of St. George Street and Alden Ringquist of Shipyards Lane, both descendants of John and Priscilla Alden, have teamed up to bring the first annual Speak for Thyself Awards Dinner to Duxbury.

"The Alden House is the ultimate symbol of Duxbury," Cook said. "The Alden House is the only remaining structure still owned by a Pilgrim family. It's a quiet treasure."

And as the story goes, Priscilla Mullins Alden was also a treasure, but she didn't remain quiet when it came to her future and that's what inspired the creation of the award. When Myles Standish asked John Alden to tell Mullins that he was interested in her, Mullins told Alden to "speak for thyself." Alden admitted that he was interested in her as well and the two were married.

"Often times historic structures become rundown and disappear," Cook said. "But we want to increase awareness and make this home relevant to today's historians and students. So, we created an event to connect people to the Alden spirit. Priscilla is the original survivor and the original bachelorette. She had more interest in a barrel maker than the captain of the colony and she and John were together until their 80s."

"They were America's first couple," Ringquist said. "Their story was made famous by the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem, The Courtship of Miles Standish. And we thought 'why not honor women who exemplify courage?'"

Cook and Ringquist have chosen four modern women to honor at the first awards dinner. The pair selected Former First Lady Barbara Bush based on the foundation she runs that is dedicated to children's causes.

"She is one of two women who was the wife and the mother of a president of the United States," Cook said. "The other woman was

Abigail Adams, who is an Alden descendent."

Doreen Bilezikian was chosen because she and her husband founded the Christmas Tree Shops. Ringquist said Loretta LaRoche will also be a recipient based on her background as a motivational speaker for women. The final lady of the evening will be Duxbury's own Helen Philbrick.

"She is the dame of Duxbury," Ringquist said. "She's in her 90s and still teaches caning at the Senior Center. The land given to the Wildfunds Trust was hers and she recently released a book."

The women and the public are invited to celebrate at the Alden House on Saturday evening, Aug. 5. A \$50 donation to the Alden House will allow guests to enjoy a seat at the event, a dinner by Mark Collins and music by the Buddy Sironian Orchestra. And of course, the Alden House will be open to allow first timers to take a tour.

"We hope to sell 200 tickets," Ringquist said. "We don't expect to make any money this year. But if it goes well, it could become the big annual summer event in Duxbury."

The awards and dinner will take place on the front lawn of the historic site. Valet parking will be provided by the DHS Hockey Team with tips going back to the team according to Ringquist. Police Chief Mark DeLuca will provide a detail for the evening to ensure the event runs smoothly and safely.

"This will create an annual event and continue Priscilla's legacy," Cook said. "I hope people will come out and support a great cause in this town that is full of tradition."

Cook and Ringquist hope the awards will also assist in securing the Alden House as a National Historic Landmark. Ringquist said the house is already on the National Historic Register, but landmark status is a lengthier process. If accepted, the home would be the only site in Duxbury with this designation.

Tickets for the event are available at Westwinds Bookshop, Snug Harbor Tile, Benchwarmers, The Finished Window, Featherstones and the Law Offices of Thomas Tucker.